

Notes from the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA Team Meeting; September 14, 2000; 1:00 PM; Corps of Engineers Conference Room, Albuquerque

In attendance:

Karen Browne, NMED/SWQB

William DeRagon, Corps

Ellen Dietrich, SAIC

Richard Fike, Corps

Rhea Graham, NMISC

Walter Hines, CH2M Hill

Conrad Keyes, Jr., EWRI

Charles Lujan, Pueblo of San Juan

Clay Mathers, Corps

Tracy Matthews, NMISC

Robert Padilla, Bureau of Reclamation

Gary Rutherford, Corps

Steve Silcox, USFWS

Gail Stockton, Corps

Leann Towne, Bureau of Reclamation

Julie Tsatsaros, NMED/SWQB

Larry White, Bureau of Reclamation

- ❖ Rhea Graham opened the meeting and asked that all technical team members pick up the handouts that should be added to the project notebooks. These include a template for the Study Plans to be developed, the comments from the first five public scoping meetings, and articles from *Ecological Applications*, “Managing the Land-Water Interface”, published by the Ecological Society of America. Additional information on developing the Plans of Study was handed out to the technical team leaders.
- ❖ Walter Hines gave a presentation on the technical approach for developing the City of Albuquerque’s Water Management Strategy hydraulic evaluation for their EIS on the Drinking Water Project. This EIS will analyze the impacts of using San Juan-Chama water to replace groundwater as the city’s drinking water source. The draft EIS is planned to be available by the beginning of next year. The approach being considered is an alternative to using URGWOM below Cochiti that is simplified and intended to complement URGWOM.
 - Flow data from 1943 through 1998 were reviewed to select the period of the base data to be used in the analyses.
 - It was determined that the mean annual flows 1943 through 1970 were lower, as a group, than the flows from 1971 through 1998.
 - Different periods were considered to be used but they are leaning toward selected hydrographs from the 1971-1998 period plus simulated 1950s drought years.
 - The total amount of San Juan-Chama water allotted to the City for the 1971 through 1998 period is 0.94 million acre-feet, 41% of which went to MRGCD. Miscellaneous losses, evaporation, and water in storage amounted to approximately 35% of the total.
 - The monthly flow data between San Felipe and Albuquerque and the difference between average annual flows were plotted. Using a trend line, Walter pointed out that there is little change and no strong trends in the flow differences from 1943 through 1998. Increased efficiency may account for a slight change in flow differences in the later years. Albuquerque to Bernardo showed a slight downward trend.

- MRGCD crop acreage has remained approximately the same throughout the period.
- The approach proposed for the Albuquerque EIS involves the following:
 - Use the 1943-1998 period of record to show the apparent losses between gages.
 - Use the 1971-1998 data, including data from the 1950s drought years, to analyze impacts with and without San Juan-Chama water.
 - Determine the flows needed below Cochiti to meet demands.
 - Develop simplified RiverWare simulations of the San Juan-Chama water to Cochiti. Use this to analyze the impacts of changes on fish, recreation, and other uses above Cochiti.
- Questions and discussion
 - Will Albuquerque incorporate timing of releases into their alternatives?
 - Yes, the city must plan to use wells in dry years.
 - They must identify the threshold water level at which point diversions are stopped, and how much water must be left in the river though Albuquerque.
 - Conrad Keyes recommended that they only use the flows from 1971-1998 because the river system is so different than prior to that period. The drought of the '50s was partially man-made because Compact deliveries were not met. Flow data from 1943-1970 can help to estimate flows during the drought, which could be simulated using URGWOM.
 - Why is twice the amount of water diverted at Angostura?
 - The city has the right to use all of its San Juan-Chama water. Twice the amount represents full consumptive use of San Juan-Chama water with a 50% return flow back to the river.
 - Do the city water calculations take into account losses in the river?
 - Yes.
 - Conrad stated that the city should simulate different types and amounts of losses in different seasons.
 - Walter said that they will be changing the non-irrigation season hydrograph.
 - Rhea said that since the EIS will be available by January, the Water Operations Review can incorporate the information into its integrated Plan of Study. She also asked Walter what the city wants from the Water Operations Review. He responded that:
 - The city would be interested in the comments that are submitted through the NEPA process.
 - They would like to see the accuracy of the loss rates below Cochiti improved in URGWOM.
 - What will the output of the city's analysis be?
 - They anticipate having four to five hydrographs representing wet, dry, and mean flows with and without San Juan-Chama water for each reach between the gages.

- ❖ Reports from technical team meetings. Each team representative was also asked to identify who will staff displays at the upcoming scoping meetings.
 - Recreation—Cynthia Piirto
 - Cynthia worked with the URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team to identify reservoir pool levels needed for recreational uses.
 - Clay McDermott from the Bureau of Reclamation will also participate on this team.
 - The Management Team encouraged Cynthia to hold meetings with her team members, Clay McDermott and Steve Harris, so they can determine what resources will be needed in the next fiscal year and to develop their Plan of Study for the rest of the Water Operations Review.
 - Geomorphology Technical Team—Robert Padilla
 - Their last meeting was held on August 30 and the next meeting is scheduled for September 25 at 9:00 a.m. at the Corps of Engineers building.
 - They will send the notes either to Ellen Dietrich or to a Project Manager.
 - Riparian Systems Technical Team—Larry White
 - They have not met as a team but hope to schedule a meeting by the end of October.
 - Steve Silcox from the USFWS will be added to this team.
 - Larry plans to spend more time on the Water Operations Review now that the Draft EIS for the Low Flow Conveyance Channel is completed.
 - ➡ ▪ Larry asked where technical teams should be by the end of the year. Rhea responded that **technical teams should have their membership and meeting schedules established and Plans of Study should be developed.** The project schedule is included in the technical team notebooks.
 - Socioeconomics Technical Team—Gary Rutherford
 - No meeting was held last month but one is scheduled for October 12 before the next ID NEPA Team meeting. They will discuss GIS needs at the next meeting.
 - A NMISC member has been added to the team and will soon be participating.
 - Water Quality Technical Team—Julie Tsatsaros
 - Their September 7 meeting was poorly attended so they rescheduled for September 21 at 9:00 a.m. at the Runnels Building library in Santa Fe.
 - They plan to add representatives from the IBWC and the NMISC.
 - URGWOM Integration/Water Operations Technical Team—Leann Towne
 - They meet on the first Friday of each month at 1:00 p.m. at the Corps of Engineers conference room.
 - Different technical teams have been working with this team to tell them what is needed from the Planning Model of URGWOM.
 - They plan to coordinate with the IBWC before the El Paso scoping meeting.
 - Cultural Resources Technical Team—Clay Mathers
 - No meetings have been held recently. Their last meeting was in April because members have been involved with recovery after the Cerro Grande fire.

- Some GIS data from the Archaeological Records Management System (ARMS) of the NM SHPO have been processed.
 - Charles Lujan or a Council member from San Juan Pueblo will be added to this team. **He will let the Management Team know who will participate.**
- Aquatic Systems Technical Team—Richard Fike
- No meetings have been held since June.
 - Team members have interacted with members of the GIS and Geomorphology Technical Teams.
 - They intend to begin developing the Aquatic Habitat Model in October.
- GIS Technical Team—Clay Mathers
- This team met for the first time on September 6 and will meet again for a demonstration of a web-based GIS system on September 26.
 - They agreed that a pilot project should be developed, using actual GIS data from several of the teams in a designated reach. The purpose of this is to determine what data would be needed, and to identify the issues, problems, and conflicts that will arise from integrating GIS data from several technical teams. This will help the technical teams visualize how GIS data can be used, and to anticipate what problems will be faced in order to address them before a great deal of time and money is invested into acquiring potentially incompatible data.
 - Clay is soliciting data for this demo from the technical teams. **Technical team members should contact Clay if they would like to use some of their data in the demo.**
 - Art Martinez noted that much of the data on tribal lands and other data of cultural importance are confidential. No data should be released outside of this process before being reviewed by BIA and possibly by tribal representatives. Clay agreed and noted that confidential data would be labeled as such in the metadata for each GIS coverage. **Art will be contacted to review the data.**
- Gail Stockton noted that **GIS will be the tool used to integrate data from all technical teams for analysis.**
- **For all technical teams to do:**
- **Set up regular meetings with all team members and take notes at the meetings. Send meeting dates to one of the Project Managers in advance** so they can post the information on the web site and inform other technical team members. The technical team meetings are open and should be announced to enable others outside the teams to observe.
 - **Submit the notes to one of the Project Managers.** This will become part of the Administrative Record and will document the involvement of the cooperating agencies and the lead agencies.
 - **Technical teams should inform the Management Team of resources they will need** in the next fiscal year. The Management Team will then discuss these requests with the Executive Committee.
 - **Plans of Study must be developed by the entire team soon. Each technical team member should sign the Plan of Study.**

- A workshop on developing Plans of Study is planned to be held for all technical team members this fall. Technical teams will be expected to present their draft plans to get feedback from other teams and to ensure consistency between teams.
- Further discussion on technical team meeting schedules and notes:
 - Charles Lujan recommended selecting a day each month for the technical team meeting and sticking to the schedule, so everyone knows when it is and can plan for the meeting.
 - Julie Tsatsaros has learned from experience in the TMDL program that outside groups will ask what has been done. The technical team notes are one means to provide them with this information.
 - Some e-mail among technical team members to review documents is acceptable but **the team leader should keep track of who reviewed the documents and what their comments were, whether they approved the information or recommended changes.**

❖ Quality Assurance/Quality Control Plan (a draft was distributed)—Conrad Keyes, Jr.

- Conrad noted that a quality review is required by NEPA and has been established as a policy of the Joint Lead Agencies.
- The QA/QC Plan is Chapter 6 of the Work Plan. The Management Team has reviewed the draft.

➤ **Conrad would like to know which version of the table listing the technical team members (Table 6-1) is preferred.**

➤ A few biographical listings from technical team members are still missing. **The Management Team and the technical team leaders can help get these** once the technical team membership is finalized.

❖ The Management Team has been giving briefings to interested groups. Technical team members can attend if they wish, but should let the Management Team know in advance.

❖ A second letter inviting tribes and pueblos to participate in the Water Operations Review will be sent out next week. (The first letter was sent July 2, 1999.) **Art Martinez asked that the BIA Area Director be copied on the letters.**

❖ Status of MOAs

- Six MOAs are under review; the NMDA and USFWS MOAs have been approved by the cooperating agencies and are awaiting signatures by the Executive Committee.
- A signing ceremony may be scheduled for December 6 before the Steering Committee meeting.
- Art noted that the BIA is interested in signing an MOA but can only do this if the pueblos agree.

❖ The Management Team will be attending NEPA training in October.

❖ **The next meeting of the ID NEPA Team will be held on October 12 at 1:00 p.m. in the Corps of Engineers conference room.**